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Leading the Charge to Implement Strategic Engagement Initiatives to Capture Enhanced Online Learning Opportunities

Peter O'Reilly
Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University, oreillyp@erau.edu

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Leading the Charge to Implement Strategic Engagement Initiatives to Capture Enhanced Online Learning Opportunities

Dr. Peter O'Reilly

Associate Professor and Director of Faculty Engagement

College of Business

Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University

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Goal of This Session

▶ Making Online Courses Feel More Like In-Person Courses.

▶ Discussion on Various Effective Engagement Activities.

▶ Results of Engagement Activities Pilots.

▶ Next Steps...

Online courses are here to stay, and their use will expand greatly in the next few years. The question is...

"Are we, as educators, ready for this learning migration?"

Background

▶ More than 90% of our courses are online.

▶ We have over 400 Faculty, most are Adjuncts.

▶ 8,000 Students!

▶ Training Faculty to teach online courses had not existed.

▶ Introducing engagement activities to online courses began in August 2019.

The Embry-Riddle Online Difference

The Most Important Factor with the Online Modality is Setting the Tone Early!

Our Message to Our Students

- We care, and we want STUDENTS to know that we care.

- We want to help remove obstacles to STUDENT success.

- We want to know our STUDENTS, why they are here, and how we can support them.

- And….what do STUDENTS think?

Research Findings-Based on Feedback from our Students

▶ What Students want from Online Courses:

  ▶ To better know their Instructors

  ▶ More knowledge of their Classmates

  ▶ Input on the assignments for their courses - Make them relevant, current, and associated with their work

  ▶ Greater opportunities for interactive events

  ▶ Timely feedback on assignments

  ▶ Meaningful feedback from Instructors on Students' assignments

Knowledge of Their Instructors and Improved Knowledge of Students by Their Instructors

- Zoom Introductions Soft Pilot – August Semester
  - Four undergraduate courses were selected with a total of 130 Students.
  - During the first two weeks of the course the Faculty engaged with their Students through a Zoom Introduction session.
  - The Faculty were provided with Dashboard Data on their Students.
  - The Dashboard Data consisted of such Student information as GPA, Program, number of courses taken over the past few years, etc.
  - The Dashboard Data was used in Zoom Introduction sessions at the beginning of the semester.

Knowledge of Their Instructors and Improved Knowledge of Students by Their Instructors (Cont.)

- The intent of the Zoom sessions was to introduce the Faculty to the Students, and vice versa, as well as discuss the life and academic goals of the Students.

- More than 100 Students participated in the Zoom sessions.

- 85.3% of Students felt the Zoom Sessions were very helpful.

- All four Faculty reported very favorable reactions to the Zoom sessions.

Sample of Student Comments from the Zoom Introduction Sessions

- I felt it was valuable because speaking with someone live line via Zoom bridges the gap between online instruction and face-to-face instruction. I found the video conference refreshing and it made me feel more comfortable as a student.

- It was good to meet the instructor to get an idea of their background and I think it also adds a personal touch to a non-personal learning platform. More importantly, it offers an opportunity to ask the instructor about any questions regarding the course.

- The meeting was valuable to understand the professor's expectations and what we will be learning in the class.

- It provided me with a deeper connection with the professor. It brought about humanizing the online course, which in my opinion has been missing with online classes. Additionally, it introduced a dynamic that presented itself in the form of mentorship. I got a focus on my life goals from the session, in which this class will help, but the actual advice and conversation were invaluable to me.

- I got to meet my professor, share my thoughts about the class. It felt very close and personal. It was fantastic.

Major Zoom Introduction Challenges

▶ How to insert the Zoom Rollout into the courses?
  ▶ We used three different channels of communication.

▶ How to schedule the Zoom sessions, especially with international Students?
  ▶ We are trying several ways - Bookings, Microsoft Teams, etc.

Zoom Introductions Next Steps

- ▶ Improve Dashboard Data Information, possibly more personal points.

- ▶ Increased Pilot in October Semester

  - ▶ 20 Faculty - Full Time and Adjuncts.

  - ▶ Undergraduate and Graduate Courses.

  - ▶ Decide how to bring Zoom Introductions into the courses.

  - ▶ Continue to survey both Students and Faculty.

  - ▶ Incorporate new ideas into January Rollout.

- ▶ Major Rollout in January 2021

More Knowledge of Students' Classmates

▶ Revised Student-to-Student Introduction Assignments from Written Format to Videos (3 minutes maximum) and Video Replies (1 minute maximum).

▶ Outcomes-

   ▶ A wider scope in the Introductions.

   ▶ A greater number of replies to other Students.

   ▶ Enhanced networking among Students.

▶ Participating in Zoom Discussion Sessions!

Student Input on Course Assignments

- ▶ Make them relevant, current, and associated with their work.

- ▶ A focus on "Teachers Teaching" from Senior University Management.

- ▶ Giving Faculty more freedom to bring into their courses the real world.

- ▶ Allow Students a way to bring into their courses assignments that reflect their workplace needs.

- ▶ Issue - Control of such assignments.

Greater Opportunity for Interactive Events and Improved Communications

- An issue with any type of interactive event is scheduling.
- We have Students located all over the world.
- To counter scheduling issues we try to:
  - Increase the use of videos within the course on Announcements and Assignment Feedback.
  - Allow the Students to submit some Assignments via videos.
  - Use Zoom sessions as an option on Discussion assignments to help fulfill the objective of learning- the exchange of ideas.
- Better communications through Announcements and Emails - Use a Student's first name as often as possible in communications.

Use Zoom Sessions as an Option for Discussion Assignments

- Started Pilot in August semester of giving Students an option to complete the normal written version of Discussion assignments or participate in an optional Zoom session on the same topics.

- Small sample size to date:
  - 16/29 Students (55%) opted in the first week to participate in the Zoom Discussion session.
  - 20/29 Students (69%) participated in the second week of the Pilot.

- Due to Students being in many countries, three Zoom sessions are offered each week.

Student Comments on Optional Zoom Discussion Assignments

- Personally, I believe the Zoom sessions are a great way to create engagement for online students. Not to mention, the great interaction and opportunity for everyone to share experiences and learn from each other.
  Believe it or not this was the first time in almost 3 years at ERAU that I had this level of interaction with my fellow classmates.

- To me, because it actually encourages interaction and sharing of experiences. Whereas, otherwise, I would just be checking off another assignment for the week.

- I believe that having the option for Zoom discussions is rich. I understand that with scheduling conflicts not all students may be able to participate in the Zoom discussion, but I found it to enhance the course material. Additionally, I viewed it more than a discussion, but as a mini lecture as well because the instructor's feedback was much more than a sentence or two, and much more relevant to the topic.

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I Felt Guilty

▶ A few semesters ago I had a Student from an in-person campus taking her first online course.

▶ She asked what day and time was the lecture for the first module.

▶ I told her that online courses do not have lectures.

▶ Then the guilt set in!

▶ I decided to do video lectures for each chapter.

▶ The lecture include some of the key chapter material and my take on the course material covered.

▶ 80% of the Class viewed these videos.

▶ I continue to do weekly video lectures...My guilt is gone!

▶ I also have a better knowledge of the course material.

Timely Feedback on Assignments

▶ University Policy is seven days.

▶ That would represent the same date new assignments are due.

▶ This gap often prevents Students from seeing how they did on the prior assignments.

▶ Recommended timely feedback time is 48 hours after the assignment deadline.

Meaningful feedback from Instructors on Students' assignments

▶ This is our #1 concern from Students- Not receiving meaningful feedback on their assignments.

▶ What does a grade of 85 or 92 mean when the only comment from the Instructor is "Good job!".

▶ The "Babysitter" syndrome!

▶ Suggested Reply:

  ▶ Part A- Explain how the Student did on an assignment

  ▶ Part B- Allow the Faculty to respond to the assignment. This provides another view on the assignment. It also permits the Instructor to bring her/his work/life experiences into the assignment and course.

Mentoring Faculty on Engagement Activities

▶ As the College Faculty Trainer, I have been mentoring Faculty identified as needing to be more effective.

▶ I introduce these Faculty to the Engagement Activities covered in this presentation.

▶ I mentor them through the next course they teach to see how they use the Engagement Activities.

▶ 10/12 of the Faculty mentored in March and May actively used Engagement Activities in their courses.

▶ They have received higher Student evaluation scores and positive Student comments.

▶ In addition, these Faculty members have found a new way of making learning more enjoyable.

Closing

- Engagement Activities can indeed make online courses more personal and improve the effectiveness of our Faculty.

- Questions???
- Contact Information-
  - Dr. Peter O'Reilly
  - oreillyp@erau.edu
  - 480-471-2388

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